INTRODUCTION
Frontiers in Motion (Frontem): Comparative Perspectives on European Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation, and Integration

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This special section, edited by the author, presents five articles developed from the Frontiers in Motion (Frontem) doctoral seminar held in Strasbourg, France, in October 2021, on "Borders in Motion: Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration". The event was organized within the framework of the Jean Monnet Network, "Frontières en mouvement: quels modèles pour l'Union Européenne *(Frontem)?" ("Frontiers in Motion: what models for the EU?")*[1] *which aimed at fostering knowledge and practice exchanges on cross-border management models and various perceptions of borders across European (and North American) border regions. The diverse contributions illustrate the complexity of borders in Europe and that there has never been an abolition of all types and functions of borders in the European Union (EU). It therefore offers a critical reading of the "Europe without borders" model of the EU (Cooper 1989; Brunet-Jailly & Wassenberg 2020).*

In 2023, "draw me a border, please" recalls the sad yet wishful and poetic "draw me a sheep" request in *Le petit Prince* of Antoine de Saint Exupéry. Indeed, in 2019, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, announced a new programme of which top priorities are the construction of "solid borders" for the European Union (EU) (Von der Leyen 2019, 18). Such policy, however, stands in stark contrast with the well-intended but paradoxical "Europe without borders" discourse that has long dominated the European Commission and historiography of European integration (Wassenberg 2020a, 30).

There is indeed a paradox between open and closed borders in the Union, between de-bordering and re-bordering, which has so far received little attention in European Studies. Since 2015, the various crises in Europe—terrorism, migration, pandemic—have severely shaken the image of "Europe without borders". The return of more or less systematic border controls at the internal and external borders of the EU has led to a prevailing logic of re-bordering, which not only endangers the principle of free movement of the internal market but also leads to protectionist reactions, new nationalist movements, and the rise of Euroscepticism

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(Brunet-Jailly 2018; Conrad *et al.* 2019; Castan Pinos & Radil 2020; Hallgrimsdottir *et al.* 2020; Roos 2021; Lamour 2022). What happened to the ideal of "Europe without borders" that so many committed Europeans have fervently defended?

The process of European integration has indeed long been based on the objective of establishing a borderless Europe, whereby free movement becomes a fundamental principle. This objective has been pursued since the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952. It was closely linked to Jean Monnet's functionalist approach to European integration. Indeed, the Schuman Declaration of May 9, 1950, called for "the import and export of coal and steel between the participating countries to be immediately exempted from all customs duties" (Schuman Declaration 1950). It did not explicitly mention "Europe without borders" but explained that eliminating economic borders in the coal and steel market was the first step towards a European federation: "By merging the basic industries and establishing a new High Authority whose decisions will be binding for France, Germany and the other participating countries, this proposal will form the first cornerstone of a European federation" (ibid.). The Treaty of Rome, signed on the 25th of March, 1957, confirmed this approach by aspiring to the general elimination of border controls, that is, "the abolition, as between Member States, of obstacles to freedom of movement for persons, services and capital" (Article 3[c]). This larger objective of de-bordering Europe was partially consolidated in 1962, when the European Economic Community (EEC) established the customs union and all internal border duties were abolished. However, it was first restricted to the elimination of borders, as barriers, to the free movement of goods (Wassenberg 2019, 44).

It was not until the mid-1980s that the objective of a "Europe without borders" formally encompassed the free mobility of people, services, and capital (Warlouzet 2019, 258–259). This project was launched in 1985 by the new president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, and for the first time put an emphasis on the elimination of border gates and crossings to facilitate the mobility of people. Nevertheless, the interest in human mobility was economic, since it essentially aimed at the movement of workers, i.e., people as resources of production in the EEC (Thielemann & Armstrong 2012, 160). The Schengen Agreement in 1985 added a political dimension by emphasizing the movement of people. At first in 1984, it was an initiative taken by a small number of Member States (France, Germany, and the three Benelux countries) in response to a series of strikes by Italian and French border control officers, who had complained about the ever-increasing workload at the border, and following a lorry drivers' strike. On June 14, 1985, with the intention of facilitating the free movement of goods, the leaders of those five member states sailed on the Princess Marie-Astrid boat on the Moselle River near the small town of Schengen where they signed the Schengen Agreement. It provided for the progressive abolition of border controls at the common borders of the signatory countries (Blanco Sío-López 2015, 49–50). Originally designed to facilitate the implementation of the European Single Market, the Schengen Agreement became part of the overall mobility policy (Wassenberg 2019, 64–65). Schengen also harmonized visa requirements, giving residents of border regions the freedom *"to cross borders outside designated checkpoints"*, and replaced passport controls with *"visual surveillance of vehicles traveling at a moderate speed"*, thus allowing vehicles to *"cross the border without stopping"* (Infantino 2019, Introduction).

The agreement led to the 1990 adoption of the Schengen Convention, which provided for the abolition of internal border controls and a common visa policy. For the internal borders, the Schengen Information System (SIS) was set up to allow for the exchange of data and information on criminal activities and for coordinating investigation of cross-border crimes (Bevers 1993, 83). The Convention did not enter into force until March 25, 1995, but by then it had also been signed by Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Also, by April 1995, Austria, Finland, and Sweden followed. It was therefore not surprising to see that, although initially developed outside the EEC legal framework, it was quickly integrated into the EU's Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, becoming the so-called Schengen *Acquis*, or collections of laws and regulations (Official Journal of the European Communities 2000). Those *Acquis* were now applied to all Member States and were also open to neighbouring EU states. The Schengen rules were enshrined in the Schengen Borders Code in 2006, which guaranteed a uniform application of the principle of free movement of persons, i.e., the disappearance of identity checks in the Schengen area (EC Regulation 2006). In 2007, the Lisbon Treaty confirmed the institutional framework of the Schengen area and by 2015, 26 countries had successively acceded to the Schengen Agreement, four of which were non-EU members (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) and only two EU Member States, the UK and Ireland, were allowed to opt out. "Europe without borders" thus seemed to have become a reality, both economically and politically, even extending beyond the borders of the Union to some neighbouring countries.

Taking these achievements into account, how is it possible in 2019 that the European Commission called for the construction of "solid borders"? In fact, the notion of a "Europe without borders" stems from a misinterpretation and mystification of the objectives of European integration. The European Commission increasingly linked the model of a "Europe without borders" to the ideal of a European Federation (Wassenberg 2022, 422). When presenting his White Paper on the implementation of the Single Market (European Commission 1985), Delors focused on

eliminating *"all internal European economic frontiers"*. However, Delors was also a convinced federalist, and his main goal was not the Single Market *per se* but two broader projects, the monetary union and the political union. These projects were negotiated at the Intergovernmental Conference in 1991 and 1992 leading to the signature of the Maastricht Treaty. The myth of a "Europe without borders" was born by suggesting that the implementation of the internal market by 1992, which coincided with creation of the European Union (EU), would also accomplish the European Federation.

In reality, however, the Maastricht Treaty provided an institutional framework with three pillars of policy areas for the Union, two of which remained intergovernmental: the foreign and security policy, and, the justice and home affairs one. Only the first pillar of the EEC allowed for a *"federalist"* integration in the area of the monetary policy, where the elimination of economic borders would lead to the creation of a monetary union (Bussière & Maes 2019, 251–252). Therefore, it had never been intended to abolish political (state) borders and the EU always remained an organization *sui generis* and has not become a European federation.

The myth therefore did not correspond to the reality, which remained a space for free movements with the elimination of mainly economic borders. This also counted for the Schengen Convention, which envisaged the abolition of border controls on persons, but did not eliminate political borders as such. Indeed, the absence of internal border controls was compensated by deploying increased controls at the external borders to regulate access outside the Schengen area (Ullestad 2018, 239). Besides, there was also the possibility for "mobile" customs controls that would not necessarily be carried out at the border itself, thus creating the notion of "mobile" borders, which can be displaced within Union Member States in order to continue, if deemed necessary, identity and customs checks (Amilhat-Szary 2015, 4–6). Thus, the myth of a "Europe without borders" was based on a pro-European discourse by the Union's institutions regarding European integration, which did not take into account the complexity of borders and their different functions. It implicitly extended the objective of a 'Europe without economic borders' to an ideal vision of a 'Europe without (all) borders'. This discourse led to two mistaken impressions about the Union among the European population: first, that all borders within the EU have negative functions and connotations, and, second, that they should be or have already been all abolished.

From 2015 onwards, the various crises in Europe led to the end of this myth, and a movement of re-bordering within the Union was documented (Wassenberg 2022, 425). The economic and financial crisis of 2008 had already resulted in protectionist measures by some EU Member States in order to soften the effects of the crisis and to protect national economies. This was particularly noticeable in Germany, which was widely criticized for its lack of solidarity with the southern countries that were hit harder by the crisis: Greece, Spain, and France (Dujardin *et al.* 2010, Introduction). However, above all the migration crisis of 2015 and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 shattered the myth of "Europe without borders", as they have led to more or less permanent border closures and controls across the Union.

When the migration crisis hit in 2015, it disrupted the principle of free movement in Europe as it led to a process of re-bordering in the Schengen area. It was German Chancellor Angela Merkel's exclamation "*Wir schaffen das* (we can manage this)" in August 2015, which encouraged a massive influx of refugees into the EU (Schmelter 2018, 167–168). There was a domino effect after the Hungarian government decided to open its borders to neighbouring European countries, which initially led to a de-bordering process within the Schengen area. Refugees travelled to Germany via Austria, or continued their way to Sweden, where they were also welcome (Wassenberg 2020a, 32). However, the internal de-bordering quickly led to a re-bordering process in member states that were less welcoming than Germany or Sweden (Wassenberg 2023, chapter 4). For example, even if France, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands were not priority-destination-countries for refugees, from the end of 2015, they began to advocate for the establishment of internal border controls (Colombeau 2017, 486). By the spring of 2016, even Germany and Sweden had revised their initial open border policy because they were overwhelmed by the uncontrolled flow of arriving refugees (Lovee 2017, 130). The media reacted uniformly to the migration crisis by announcing the end of "Europe without borders" and accused the EU of having failed its main goal of European integration (Tatjani 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic then reinforced the trend towards re-bordering in the Schengen area. In the spring of 2020, because of the risk of the spread of the virus, most EU Member States reacted by not only introducing border controls but by systematically closing borders to people (Brunet-Jailly & Carpenter 2020). This was done everywhere without prior mutual agreement (European Parliament 2020; European Court of Auditors 2022), thus repudiating "Europe without borders". The Member States based their re-bordering measures on several articles of the Schengen Code, in particular, Article 23, which allowed checks on the national territory and provided rights to expel individuals if the State's sanitary security was in danger, and, Article 28, which gave States the authority, with immediate effect, to carry out border controls for a renewable period of 20 days (Wassenberg 2021, 173). The COVID-19 crisis has therefore led to the use of the border as a means of protecting oneself from the neighbour on the other side and thereby ended the myth of "Europe without borders".

Those recent border closures and controls have been a traumatic experience in the EU where unrestricted mobility had determined everyday life of the citizens for nearly two generations (MOT 2021, 8–9). Suddenly people in borderlands found themselves in a new "Europe of borders" rather than in a "Europe without borders" (Wassenberg 2020b, 116). The symbolic value of the closed borders in the form of barriers and turnpikes was the most devastating consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. It left the impression that the EU was being transformed into a space of disintegration rather than integration.

The Jean Monnet Network *"Frontières en mouvement: quels modèles pour l'UE (Frontem)?"* aims to exchange knowledge and practices on cross-border management models and the perception of borders in European border regions. It links two disciplinary fields that have until now been little connected: Border Studies and European Studies. The key question addressed by the network is how to assess the role of the border in the process of European integration when faced with processes of re-bordering and the re-questioning of the model of a "Europe without borders" (Wassenberg 2020a, 30–39). The objective of the Frontem network is therefore to offer a critical reading of "Europe without borders". It starts from the observation that the EU has developed a unilateral approach to borders, which essentially retains their economic dimension as a barrier, without sufficiently taking into account other aspects, symbolic and political, in particular. The hypothesis put forward is that political borders have never disappeared and that there is an ambivalence of borders in the EU both as places of contact and exchange and means of protection and delimitation. Thanks to the comparative approach to the management and perception of borders in European cross-border regions, the network wishes to develop a more differential and multidimensional approach to the border. It therefore takes a new look at the role of the border in European integration, considering that there is not a single model of the perception and management of borders in the EU, but that they depend on the specific context of each border area concerned.

The partners of Frontem—the University of Southern Denmark in Sonderborg, the Euro-Institute in Kehl, the Hochschule Kehl, the Babes-Bolyai Cluj University, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies in Armagh in Northern Ireland, the Catholic University of Louvain, the University of Arras, the *Mission opérationnelle transfrontalière* (MOT) in Paris, the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) in Budapest—carried out a cross-analysis of border management and perception in their border areas by organizing research seminars and focus groups with local stakeholders. The University of Victoria, in Canada, provided an important contrast to both internal and external assessments of European Border functions, practices, and realities. Frontem training goals were also to bring senior

scholars and young researchers/doctoral students to this research project. This special section illustrates a diversity of border regions that brings much needed nuances to the idea of a "Europe without borders".

Claude Beaupré, in her article "Integrative Organized Hypocrisy? Normative Contentions within the EU and the Refugee Migrant Crisis", deals with the re-bordering process in the EU during the migration crisis in 2015. She not only criticises the lack of a unified support for border controls by the EU, but also its externalization policy which avoids obligations towards asylum seekers by not only limiting access to its territory but by shifting the EU border to external, third countries. She also reveals re-bordering in terms of rising mental borders against refugees as the vast majority of Europeans, who have no concrete experience with migrants, are exposed to media reports that distort the reality by amplifying the crisis and demonizing refugees.

Two case studies on the Franco–Belgian border then illustrate the specificity of border perception and management in the border regions concerned. Yaël Gagnepain identifies the asymmetries of border management during the interwar period from 1919 to 1939. His article "Towards Norms and Sanctions: Interwar Franco–Belgian Border Conflict over the Insalubrity of French Factories" reveals that it took more than a century of insalubrity in the cross-border Espierre valley, situated between the cities of Roubaix and Tourcoing, for France and Belgium to agree on sanitary norms and sanctions to be imposed on French manufacturers. The historical approach points to the difficulties of Franco–Belgian cross-border relations in a context of great tensions in Europe, where national re-bordering was the prevalent tendency and cross-border cooperation the exception.

Taking up a more contemporary perspective, Nicolas Caput, in his article on "Cross-Border Regional Languages: Picard and West Flemish at the Franco–Belgian Border", shows the complexity and ambivalent role of linguistic borders in the Franco–Belgium borderlands. By investigating the role of regional language activism in the Hauts-de-France region in northern France, he first underlines that the two regional languages, Picard and West Flemish, are both cross-border, with some of the speakers being historically present in Belgium. But he then comes to the conclusion that the national border can both be perceived as a resource and as an obstacle to the development or maintenance of the cross-border regional languages.

Tobias Heyduk's approach to border perception and management is different. Taking the example of the Upper Rhine Region between France, Germany, and Switzerland, and the borderland between Ireland and Northern Ireland, he reveals the potential for innovation of border regimes in Europe. His article, "Comparing Public Sector Innovation in Cross-Border Cooperation:

A Set-Theoretic Approach", analyses innovation by empirically applying the concept of public sector innovation on cross-border cooperation in border regions. However, his proposed typology of innovation applied to 24 cases in the two border regions also illustrates the complexity and multiplicity of cross-border management regimes. From managers of the status quo, relational and organizational innovators, to public sector innovators, there are multiple possibilities for agents and agencies of cross-border cooperation.

Finally, Morgane Chovet takes a European perspective by evaluating the EU's regional policy and its effects on borders and border regions. Her article, "'Europe of the Regions': From Slogan to Effects on European Union Borders and Regions", shows that, although not being its ultimate goal, the concept of a "Europe of the regions" plays a role apprehending the EU's objective of a "Europe without borders". Thus, its regional policy promotes territorial cohesion in Europe including in cross-border territories, where the EU promotes European integration by "erasing" the obstacles to cross the borders that exist between these territories.

The different contributions in this special issue illustrate that borders in Europe are varied and complex, and that there has never been an abolition of all types and functions of borders across the EU. Collectively, the Frontem research project offers a critical reading of the "Europe without borders" discourse.

Note

1 The network *Frontières en mouvement: quels modèles pour l'UE?* (611115-EPP-1-2019-1-FR-EPPJMO-NETWORK) is a Jean-Monnet Network supported by the EU's Erasmus+ program for the period between 2019 and 2023 under the leadership of the author.

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